Science & Engineering Indicators – 2002

Appendix table 7-21.
Public preferences for level of Federal Government spending on selected policy issues: 1981–2001
(Percentages)

Policy issue	1981	1983	1985	1988	1990	1992	1997	1999	2001
Exploring space									
Too little	18	17	9	17	9	12	14	15	11
Too much	43	39	45	42	52	50	45	46	48
Reducing pollution									
Too little	52	54	69	76	76	72	65	65	63
Too much	14	11	6	4	5	7	8	7	6
Improving health care									
Too little	61	—	68	68	75	79	68	71	70
Too much	6	—	3	2	3	5	7	5	4
Supporting scientific research									
Too little	31	—	29	34	30	34	34	37	36
Too much	18	—	18	15	16	19	14	14	14
Improving education									
Too little	62	71	73	76	77	81	76	75	76
Too much	6	5	3	4	4	4	6	6	5
Helping older people									
Too little	73	—	72	76	75	73	66	71	73
Too much	3	—	3	2	2	4	5	4	3
Improving national defense[a]									
Too little	33	19	11	11	15	15	23	31	29
Too much	26	47	50	53	40	40	32	25	25
Helping low-income persons									
Too little	45	—	54	55	57	56	44	49	53
Too much	24	—	13	12	15	17	23	19	15
Sample size (number)	1,659	1,631	2,005	2,041	2,033	2,001	2,000	1,882	1,574

— = Not asked

[a]The "improving national defense" question was asked on a split ballot in 1988; therefore, the number of responses was only 1,013.

NOTES: Responses are to the following statement: "We are faced with many problems in this country. I'm going to name some of these problems, and for each one, I'd like you to tell me if you think that the Government is spending too little money on it, about the right amount, or too much." Not shown are responses "about the right amount" and "don't know" which is why percentages do not add to 100 percent.

SOURCE: National Science Foundation, Division of Science Resource Statistics (NSF/SRS), NSF Survey of Public Attitudes Toward and Understanding of Science and Technology, various years.